

Viewpoint: UNAMID

The United Nations Africa Union Mission in Darfur

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Introduction

On January 1, 2008 the United Nations largest peace-keeping force was empowered to commence its operations in Sudan. Overshadowed by that morning's assassination of a U.S. Diplomat in the capital Khartoum, the impending failure of this force did not make headline news. This article will discuss the origins, composition and status of the United Nations/African Union peacekeeping operation (UNAMID) to Sudan.

The UNAMID force was created by United Nations Security Council Resolution 1769 in July 2007. The basis for the Resolution was the ongoing humanitarian crises within the Region of Darfur in Sudan—which constitutes three of Sudan's 26 States—where Darfur is geographically the size of France. Other ongoing or latent military conflicts between Sudan and its seven neighboring African countries include Eritrea in the East, Chad in the West which is the border with Darfur and is alleged to host Chadian rebels given that Chad conducts aerial bombing of the region, and the Central Africa Republic and Democratic Republic of Congo in the South. There is also armed conflict within Sudan between the Government of Sudan/National Congress Party in the predominately Islamic northern Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) in the semi-autonomous and predominately Christian south of the country. There is a fragile Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) dating to January 2005 where a UN force (UNMIS) monitors this with 10,000 troops and 600 police and has noted its breakdown in November 2007.

Turning specifically to Darfur, which is the topic of this article, notes that fierce fighting broke in 2003 between Government of Sudan forces, allied Janjaweed militia and other armed rebel groups. Atrocities such as the murder of civilians and the rape of women and girls are alleged to be widespread and ongoing. UN humanitarian agencies are leading the largest current relief effort in the world aimed at assisting the approximately 4.2 million conflict-affected people in the Darfur crisis. Of these, 2.2 million are internally displaced, and an additional 238,000 Sudanese refugees are in eastern Chad.

More than US\$650 million in aid to Darfur is planned for 2008 by the UN and its partners, and more than 12,000 humanitarian workers are deployed in the region to bring assistance to those affected by the crisis. They include staff from 13 UN agencies, the Red Cross/Red Crescent societies and more than 80 non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Since the beginning of

2007, high numbers of aid workers have been temporarily abducted, convoys attacked or looted and humanitarian vehicles hijacked. Humanitarian organizations have been forced to relocate on numerous occasions, citing violence against aid workers.

Conflict and ethnic rivalry has been present in Darfur for centuries and is documented during the British Colonial period. Underlying the tensions in Darfur is the composition of Sudan which includes 19 different ethnic groups in 540 distinct tribes. The current conflict reared its head due to this diverse composition and the political system resulting from a military coup in 1979 which has resulted in a failed state syndrome enabled radicalism to flourish. Such radicalism was manifest with the presence of foreign elements such as Osama Bin Laden, Al-Qaeda and other terrorist training camps during the 1990s as well as the assassin Carlos the Jackal. The discovery of oil heightened tensions as did the neo-colonial presence of China. China is obtaining minerals from Sudan for its growing industry with a “no-strings” attached policy in relation to Sudan's activities. Sudan in addition to its oil also has vast quantities of iron ore and uranium phosphate.

The Diplomatic Efforts

The humanitarian situation in Darfur deteriorated to the extent that in 2003 the UN Security Council and two consecutive Secretaries-General have placed it on the top of the agenda for concern. An attempt was made in 2003 by the Africa Union to introduce an international observer force. It was hoped that such a force would be able to document the nature of the disputes and violations in Darfur and in publicizing them humiliate the Sudan government into ameliorating them. The Africa Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) force however was too small for the area of Darfur and lacked the necessary equipment such as helicopters to cover its remit. By mid-2006 it was clear that AMIS was mostly engaged in protecting itself.

The Security Council imposed an arms embargo on all non-governmental entities and individuals, including the Janjaweed, operating in Darfur on 30 July 2004 with the adoption of resolution 1556. The sanctions regime was strengthened with the adoption of resolution 1591 (2005), which expanded the scope of the arms embargo and imposed additional measures, including a travel ban and an assets freeze on four individuals—two rebel leaders, a former Sudanese air force chief and the leader of a pro-government militia.

In August 2004, the Secretary-General dispatched Louise Arbour, the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and Juan Mendez, his Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, to Darfur to assess the situation on the ground and to urge all sides to put a stop to the serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. The Special Adviser returned to Darfur in September 2005 to review the failed status of implementation of his previous recommendations.

On 7 October 2004, the Secretary-General announced the establishment of a Commission of Inquiry to determine whether acts of genocide had occurred in Darfur. In its final report, the Commission concluded that while the Government of Sudan had not pursued a policy of genocide, its forces and allied militia had “conducted indiscriminate attacks, including killing of civilians, torture, enforced disappearances, destruction of villages, rape and other forms of sexual violence, pillaging and forced displacement.” The panel concluded that “international offences such as the crimes against humanity and war crimes that have been committed in Darfur may be no less serious and heinous than genocide.” It urged the Security Council to “act not only against the perpetrators but also on behalf of the victims”.

Following a recommendation by the Commission of Inquiry in March 2005, the Security Council, in resolution 1593, referred the situation in Darfur to the International Criminal Court (ICC) and ordered Sudan to cooperate with the Court's investigations.

On 21 April 2005, the Commission on Human Rights (predecessor of the Human Rights Council) appointed a Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Sudan. The Special Rapporteur, Sima Samar, has traveled to Sudan regularly and issued oral and written statements to the Commission (and later the Human Rights Council) and to the Third Committee of the General Assembly.

Under the auspices of the African Union (AU) and with support of the UN and other partners, the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) was signed on 5 May 2006 but did not include all parties to the crises. In accordance with the decision of the 16 November 2006 High-Level consultations in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia—attended by the former Secretary-General, the five Permanent Members of the Security Council, representatives of the Government of Sudan, the AU and other States and organizations with political influence in the region, and some African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) troop contributing countries—the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) developed, adapted and attempted to implement a three-phased approach to augment AMIS and deploy UNAMID.

The Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Darfur, Jan Eliasson, appointed in December 2006 is engaged in intensive shuttle diplomacy alongside his AU counterpart Salim Ahmed Salim in pursuit of political progress. The benchmarks of their efforts are an end to violence, a strengthened ceasefire ensured by peacekeepers, improvements in the humanitarian situation, and an end to the marginalization of Darfur through an inclusive peace agreement, with power and wealth-sharing provisions.

Agreement on peacekeeping operations was reached at the 16 November 2006 High-Level consultations in Addis Ababa; and endorsed at the 30 November meeting in Abuja, Nigeria, of the AU Peace and Security Council, and with the 19 December 2006 Presidential Statement by the UN Security Council.

In February and March 2007, the Human Rights Council deployed a special mission to report on the human rights situation in Darfur. The Council subsequently set up a human rights expert group to work with the Sudanese Government and the AU to ensure implementation of all resolutions and recommendations on Darfur in relation to human rights.

On 2 May 2007, the ICC issued arrest warrants for crimes against humanity and war crimes against former Minister of State for the Interior of the Government of Sudan and current Minister of State for Humanitarian Affairs, Ahmad Harun, and Janjaweed commander Ali Muhammad Ali Abd-Al-Rahman.

In its seventh report on the human rights situation in the Sudan (18 May 2007), the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) reported on aerial attacks conducted from January to March 2007 against civilians in Darfur by the Sudanese Air Force. The Secretary-General has repeatedly drawn the attention of the Security Council to the continuing violence in Darfur and has condemned the targeting of civilians, including aerial attacks on villages.

On June 9, 2007, the Special Envoys presented their road map towards peace in Darfur to the UN Security Council. It contained three stages: to unite all ongoing peace initiatives; shuttle diplomacy to Khartoum and to the non-signatories of the 2006 DPA; and peace negotiations.

Intensive private and public diplomacy by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and several actors in the international community resulted in Sudan's acceptance of this force in June 2007 and in its formal establishment through Security Council resolution 1769 adopted on 31 July 2007. The Resolution calls for the AU observers in the AMIS force to be rapidly reinforced by an extra 19000 UN troops. This would be the largest UN force ever to be deployed at 26000 personnel with a Chapter VII mandate and with the capacity to effectively protect civilians in Darfur.

As a result from 3 to 5 August 2007, representatives from the non-signatory movements met in Arusha, Tanzania, for talks chaired by the Special Envoys. They reaffirmed their commitment to the road map and presented a common platform on power-sharing, wealth-sharing, security arrangements, and land and humanitarian issues for the final negotiations to be held towards the end of the year. The non-signatories agreed that parties that did not participate in the Arusha consultations could join the common platform at a later date.

The Secretary-General is pursuing a political settlement to the crisis in Darfur as a top priority. He traveled to the region on the 5 September 2007. While in Sudan he announced that peace negotiations with the parties would start in Tripoli, Libya, on 27 October 2007 but little if anything resulted from these.

Peacekeeping Armed Forces

As a consequence of the diplomatic failings a military force was seen as essential. A three-stage/phase plan was conceived in an escalatory manner. Each phase has required its own set of agreements and understandings among the UN, the AU and the Government of Sudan. In order to reach these, the UN has undertaken a complex round of negotiations, including on the level and type of support, issues of command and control, and the legal framework governing the effort.

The approach consisted of measures to augment the AMIS observers in the form of a Light Support Package (LSP), a Heavy Support Package (HSP), and to culminate in UNAMID with a Chapter VII mandate should the LSP/HSP not succeed.

The Light Support Package (LSP) provided support to the management capacity of AMIS and consisted of 105 military staff officers, 34 police advisers, and 48 civilians, as well as material and equipment. While the majority of the LSP was deployed as of the end of July 2007, the dispatch of 36 armored personnel carriers was still pending. The Heavy Support Package (HSP) was deployed in the second half of 2007, designed to support AMIS comprised 2,250 military, 721 police and 1,136 civilians at a cost of \$287.9 million funded by the UN. These did not achieve their objectives and hence the third stage UNAMID was finally endorsed on 12 June 2007 and accepted in principle by the Government of Sudan after intense diplomatic activity by the Secretary-General and after long, complex technical discussions between the UN, AU and Sudanese Government.

UNAMID

On July 31, 2007, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 1769 which authorized the establishment of UNAMID under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, for an initial period of 12 months. It has the protection of civilians as its core mandate, as well as contributing to security for humanitarian assistance, monitoring and verifying implementation of agreements, assisting an inclusive political process, contributing to the promotion of human rights and rule of law, and monitoring and reporting on the situation along the borders with Chad and the CAR. In addition to its mission headquarters in El Fasher and sector headquarters in El Fasher, El Geneina and Nyala, UNAMID will have up to 55 deployment locations throughout the three Darfur states.

In his statement to the Security Council following the adoption of the resolution, the Secretary-General stated that in establishing UNAMID it was "sending a clear and powerful signal of your commitment to improve the lives of the people of the region, and close this tragic chapter in Sudan's history". He called the decision "historic and unprecedented" but warned that it is "only through a political process that we can achieve a sustainable solution to the conflict".

At full deployment and incorporating AMIS, the mission will be composed of almost 20,000 troops, more than 6,000 police and a significant civilian component. At full strength, UNAMID will become one of the largest UN peacekeeping missions in history, and larger than the UN peace operation currently in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. UNAMID was scheduled to have its management and command and control structures in place by October 2007 and to assume operational command over the LSP, the HSP and AMIS by the end of 2007.

Rodolphe Adada of the Republic of the Congo has been appointed Joint AU-UN Special Representative (JSR) for Darfur to lead UNAMID. He will report to both the UN Secretary-General and the AU Commission Chairperson. The JSR is assisted by a jointly appointed Deputy Special Representative Henry Anyidoho of Ghana. Directives to the JSR will be issued through the AU Peace and Security Commissioner and the UN Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations. General Martin Luther Agwai of Nigeria has been appointed Force Commander of UNAMID and will report to the JSR. The AU and the UN strategic headquarters will ensure effective consultation through a Joint Support Coordination Mechanism (JSCM) in Addis Ababa, which will consist of a number of liaison officers and communications equipment. The day-to-day functioning of the force will be in accordance with the concept of operations which has been jointly agreed upon by the AU and the UN. That is, in accordance with agreements made in Addis Ababa and Abuja in 2006, and as specified in the joint report on the UNAMID operation from June 2007, the command and control structures for the mission will be provided by the UN.

Conclusion

Too little too late has been voiced about Darfur and indeed UNAMID is no exception. UN Security Council Resolution 1769 of July 31, 2007 authorized 19,555 military personnel; 6,432 police, including 3,772 police personnel and 19 formed police units comprising up to 140 personnel each; and a significant civilian component. The actual strength as of January 1, 2008, the date it's operational mandate commences, was 9,065 total uniformed personnel, including 6,880 troops, 645 staff officers and military observers, 1,400 police officers, and one 140-strong formed police unit, supported by 285 international civilian personnel and 552 local civilian staff and 63 United Nations Volunteers. To date the contributors of military personnel have come from China, Gambia, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, and South Africa. Forces pledged by Burkina Faso, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, and Malawi have not materialized. The Sudanese Government has refused to permit non-African troops and negotiations persist for the pledged forces from Bangladesh, Nepal, Netherlands, Nordic countries Pakistan and Thailand. Contributors of police personnel have arrived from Bangladesh, Canada, Egypt, Finland, Gambia, Germany, Ghana, Jordan, Madagascar, Malaysia Nepal, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sweden, Tanzania, Turkey, Uganda and Zambia.

The majority of UNAMID forces deployed to date have come from the previous failed AMIS observer force. Commanders in this force noted on January 1, 2008 that they could not fill the previous Mandate where a change in name to UNAMID with the same forces and lack of suitable equipment albeit with a new Mandate would not achieve any better results. To be sure, on the due date of deployment—New Years Day 2008—UNAMID has little if any additional capacity than was deployed in AMIS. The failure to find any country willing to provide the force with 18 transport helicopters and 6 attack helicopters is major obstacle to full deployment despite the first year of operations (July 2007 to June 30, 2008) having an operating budget approved from UN funds for \$1.28 billion.

The numbers are less important than the politics. What's at issue is Khartoum's fundamental failure to accept the force. Without progress on the political side, these operational issues will not really matter. To be sure, far from facilitating deployment of UNAMID, the government of Sudan is actively obstructing and undermining it. The government of Sudan is obstructing deployment of UNAMID in at least five ways:

1. The government has failed to formally approve the list of UNAMID troop contributions.
2. The government has rejected troop units from Nepal, Thailand and Nordic countries, insisting that they will only accept African contributions. Each of the proposed units is critical to the force, and there are no alternatives that are ready to deploy.
3. The government has taken many months to allocate land for bases in Darfur, for example to allocate sites for the Zalingei area.
4. The government has attempted to insert provisions into the Status of Forces Agreement that would allow it to temporarily disable UNAMID's communications network when the government undertook "security operations," and that would require UNAMID to give Sudanese authorities prior notification of all movements of troops and equipment.
5. The government has refused to grant permission for UNAMID forces to fly at night and continues to impose curfews on peacekeepers in certain areas.
6. Rather than challenging Sudan politicians members of the international community are instead wrangling over details and shirking their own responsibilities to support the force. Progressively the optimism over the UNAMID force in Darfur has waned and the credibility of the United Nations, especially the Security Council, is at stake. Too little too late has often been voiced as criticism against the United Nations and this is one more example where no-one appears able or willing to halt the atrocities perpetrated in Darfur.

About the Author

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